

**Tell me about your career in medicine.**

I am a portfolio GP where I balance general practice alongside academic and charity work. I initially started off with a career in paediatrics but quickly realised I enjoyed managing a variety of medical problems across all age ranges and so changed to general practice. It also gives me flexibility to pursue a variety of interests such as research, teaching and international work, as well as run community outreach projects in the UK.

In addition, I am also Chair of the Muslim Doctors Association (MDA), which is a voluntary organisation established in 2004. We are a group of doctors, dentists, pharmacists, dieticians and mental health workers who deliver multidisciplinary health promotion and education to ethnic minorities in the UK. Our current campaigns are around healthy living, women's health and mental health. We are the official partners of two of the largest Muslim lifestyle exhibitions in the world where we deliver free health checks and life support training to attendees. We are also developing a digital health app for pregnant refugees to improve health outcomes and standards of care. This has received international media attention and has been listed as one of the top 12 apps for refugees worldwide. We have also presented our work at international medical conferences. We are in the process of launching a series of health workshops and drop in clinics in two mosques in East and West London to strengthen the role of mosques in the community and enable them to truly provide holistic support that addresses the social, welfare, educational and health needs of the community.

MDA's previous Chair, Dr Nadia Khalid, received the British Muslim Awards for Abbas Khan Services to Medicine in 2014 and this year we received two nominations for myself as Chair, and Dr Natasha Abdul Aziz as Women's Health Lead and were one of few, if not only, organisation to be nominated twice in one category.

**What inspired you to become a doctor?**

I knew I wanted to be a doctor since I was 8 years old. I loved science at school and was a prize-winner in Biology, so it seemed like a natural choice to develop this interest into a profession that improves the lives of others.

**You've also undertaken humanitarian relief work, what kind of projects have you been involved in?**

Humanitarian work is very challenging and nothing can ever prepare you enough for it. I have worked in various settings including as a front line doctor along the Aegean coast in Lesbos, in the "Jungle" refugee camp in Calais, as well as a research assistant for a UN report on health needs of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and am currently working as consultant for an international project to strengthen Family Medicine as a specialty in Palestine. All these settings have brought their own unique challenges and learning experiences but there are some common themes. The importance of being flexible and patient cannot be emphasised enough. The work is exhausting, both physically and emotionally, but it is also very rewarding. You don't have to do high tech life saving procedures to make a difference, above of all, these people need a listening ear and reassurance that they are not invisible. As a medical

professional it has made me determined to work for the rights of marginalised populations, both here and abroad. I am still working on a project to improve the Palestinian health system and on a digital app for pregnant refugees as mentioned above, and I deliver workshops and work in outreach clinics for refugees, asylum seekers and other marginalised populations in the UK.

**What challenges did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?**

One of the hardest challenges of a career in medicine is the long hours and constant studying. I am lucky to have a strong support network of family and friends who are very understanding.

**What are the 3 most important things you've learnt throughout your career?**

The three most important things I've learn throughout my career are a) Hard work is rewarded, short cuts are not b) Don't try and emulate other people's lives but do what is right for you c) Appreciate and never forget all the people who have helped you along the way.

**Who has been your biggest inspiration/role model to date?**

I don't have a particular role model, because our lives, circumstances, strengths and weaknesses are unique and we should focus on developing our own character and personality, and on goals and ambitions that work for us. However, there are people who inspire me every day; my mum for her tenacity and standing up for what is right and my dad for his hard work and sacrifices. One of the greatest women to have ever lived is Khadijah (may God be pleased with her), the wife of the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him), a successful woman balancing career, family and religion, and with an exemplary character that we can all learn so much from.

**What advice would you give to anyone interested in pursuing a career in medicine?**

If you are academic and enjoy science, are a people's person, like giving back to society and are willing to invest hard work and time, then it is definitely a career that you will enjoy and find rewarding.